

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9240

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 6015

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AF, SNAR, PDIP, EINV

SUBJECT: CALL ON ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER DOST

1. ON JULY 24, I PAID MY FIRST FORMAL INTRODUCTORY CALL ON ACTING FONMIN DOST, ACCOMPANIED BY MY DCM. I HAD MET DOST EARLIER, DURING UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM'S VISIT AND THEN AT SOME SUBSEQUENT SOCIAL OCCASIONS. HE IS ALWAYS FRENDLY AND WAS SO AGAIN THIS TIME. I USED OUR MEETING TO RAISE A NUMBER OF MATTERS WITH HIM.

2. NAM MEETING IN BELGRADE. DOST SAID THAT HE EXPECTED A "BITTER" DEBATE AT BELGRADE ON SOME ISSUES. ONE WAS SURE TO BE OVER ADMITTING NEW MEMBERS OF ACCREDITING OBSERVERS. HE CITED FOR EXAMPLE, THE APPLICATIONS OF MEXICO, PHILIPPINES, PAKISTAN, ROMANIA, AND PORTUGAL. OTHER ISSUES HE MENTIONED WERE CUBA, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND AFRICA. ON NONE OF THESE DID HE REVEAL THE POSITIONS HIS GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO TAKE.

3. RESTRICTIONS ON MILITARY ATTACHE TRAVEL. I ASKED DOST ABOUT THE CIRCULAR DIPLOMATIC NOTE WE RECEIVED LAST WEEK. HE SAID HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH IT AND HASTENED TO ASSURE ME THAT THE RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED WERE NONDISCRIMINATORY AND APPLIED TO ALL ATTACHES. IT HAD BEEN SENT OUT, HE SAID, FOR "SECURITY" REASONS, ALLUDING TO THE UNSETTLED STATE IN PARTS OF THE

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COUNTRY AND HINTING THAT THE NOTE WAS ISSUED FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF ATTACHES (AN EXPLANATION WE HARDLY BELIEVE). WHEN ASKED IF THE RESTRICTIONS WERE LIKELY TO BE PERMANENT, HE SEEMED TAKEN ABACK AND AFTER A PAUSE ANSWERED THAT HE SUPPOSED NOT. WHEN I ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE THREE-WEEKS ADVANCE NOTICE SEEMED UNDULY LONG, HE ACTED SURPRISED BUT SAID NOTHING. I SAID I ASSUMED THAT THE REQUEST FOR ADVANCE NOTICE OF TRAVEL

WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE RECREATIONAL TRAVEL OF OUR ATTACHES IN THE KABUL AREA (I AVOIDED SPECIFYING ANY DISTANCE OUTSIDE THE CITY OF KABUL). DOST REPLIED THAT SUCH TRAVEL WAS NOT AFFECTED BY THE CIRCULAR NOTE, BUT ADDED THAT HE HOPED ATTACHES WOULD STAY CLEAR OF AREAS WHICH WOULD RAISE SUSPICIONS AMONG AFGHAN AUTHORITIES.

4. INDAMER. ALTHOUGH DOST HAD EARLIER SENT WORD THAT HE DID NOT WANT AT THE MEETING TO DISCUSS THE DIFFICULTIES OF THIS AMERICAN COMPANY, PREFERRING THAT IT CONTINUE TO BE HANDLED AT A LOWER LEVEL, I STILL RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH HIM. I SAID THE COMPANY HAD ACCEPTED THE ORDER TO TERMINATE ITS ACTIVITIES, BUT WAS FINDING IT HARD TO SETTLE ITS LIABILITIES AND CLOSE OUT BECAUSE OF SEEMINGLY UNCOORDINATED DEMANDS BY VARIOUS GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES. I MENTIONED THAT AN AIDE MEMOIRE HAD EARLIER THAT DAY BEEN LEFT BY OUR ACTING ECONOMIC COUNSELOR WITH ANOTHER FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, WHICH CITED AGAIN THE HARASSMENT THE COMPANY WAS EXPERIENCING AND SUGGESTED THAT A GOVERNMENT INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE BE ESTABLISHED TO HELP THE COMPANY SETTLE ITS AFFAIRS. I WARNED HIM THAT IF THE INDAMER PROBLEM WAS NOT HANDLED CAREFULLY, IT HAD THE POTENTIAL OF GETTING BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION AND COULD HARM OUR OVERALL RELATIONS. DOST SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO IT.

5. DISASTER RELIEF AND ACH PROJECTS. I INFORMED HIM THAT WE WERE AWAITING A \$25 THOUSAND CHECK FROM OUR PARIS REGIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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DISBURSING OFFICE TO PRESENT TO THE GOVERNMENT. AS SOON AS IT WAS RECEIVED, I HOPED TO PRESENT IT TO HIM, DOST, OR TO FONMIN AMIN IF THE LATTER HAD RETURNED.

I ALSO APPRISED HIM OF THE GO-AHEAD WE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE DEPARTMENT TO OBLIGATE FUNDS FOR THE HELMAND VALLEY AND BAGHLAN WHEAT PROJECTS, THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT USAID EXPENDITURES SINCE THE COUP.

6. NARCOTICS. SINCE DOST IS NEW, I USED THE OCCASION, TOO, TO MENTION THE CONCERN OF THE USG AND CONGRESS ABOUT THE NARCOTICS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN. I SAID THAT A YEAR AGO A JOINT AFGHAN-UN-US COMMISSION ON NARCOTICS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED, AND IT WAS MY HOPE THIS BODY COULD CONTINUE ITS ACTIVITIES. DOST RESPONDED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE NARRCOTICS PROBLEM AND THE CONCERN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HE HOPED WE UNDERSTOOD THAT CURBING PRODUCTION POSED DIFFICULTIES FOR THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT SINCE, IN SOME AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, OPIUM CULTIVATION WAS THE ONLY ADEQUATE MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD AVAILABLE. I ASSURED HIM THAT THE USG WAS PREPARED TO ASSIST HIS GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE UN, TO ERADICTE THIS SCOURGE, AND DOST NODDED HIS HEAD IN APPROVAL.

7. STATUS OF EMBASSY ATTACHE AIRCRAFT. OUR DISCUSSION ON THIS ISSUE IS COVERED BY SEPTTEL.

8. COMMENT: AS THE ABOVE ACCOUNT MAY SUGGEST, DOST IS VERY CAUTIOUS IN MAKING STATEMENTS AND NOT GIVEN TO VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION. THIS MAY IN PART BE A REFLECTION OF INSECURITY. ALTHOUGH BROUGHT IN FROM "RETIREMENT" BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT, AND HOLDING THE NO.2 POSITION IN THE MINISTRY, HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE SELF-ASSURED NOR HAVE THE SAME DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER AS HIS PREDECESSOR, SAMAD GHAS. IT MAY BE INDICATIVE IN THIS REGARD THAT HE DOES NOT OCCUPY THE VERY COMFORTABLE CORNER ROOM OF SAMAD GHAS, BUT A STANDARD SIZED, MUCH SMALLER ROOM IN THE MIDDLE OF A CORRIDOR.
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